

Mount Yoshino's fame rests on more than just its cherry blossoms, beautiful though they are. There are also the graceful streams, which provide a perfect example of the natural beauty peculiar to Japan's mountainous countryside. In spring butterflies dance over Yoshino's meadows — covered with magnolia, azalea, "lotus grass" and rape blossoms — while clear, purling brooks weave their way in between the flowers. In autumn the slopes are adorned with robes of scarlet maple, forming a magnificent contrast with the deep blue sky.

Shinzo Maeda — the photographer who produced *Hills of the Four Seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter* — took three years to create this affectionate record of the Yoshino hamlet and its surroundings using High Definition Video equipment. The brilliant images are perfectly complemented by music composed by Norihiro Tsuru and entitled *A Man Who Made the Moon*.



Shinzo Maeda

Photographer. Born in 1922 in Tokyo, Japan. In 1965 he gave up a career in business to become a professional photographer. After forming his own company, Tanket, he turned to scenic photography. His previous HDVS work, *Hills of the Seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter*, has attracted international acclaim.

Norihiro Tsuru

Musician. Born in Tokyo in 1957. He began composing in his childhood and is currently involved in a wide range of musical activities: performing in concerts and acting as a musical director for movies, commercials, dramas, and video productions.

Spring & Autumn in Yoshino—Cherry Blossoms & Maple Leaves

Shinzo Maeda, Director

Mount Yoshino is almost too famous for its cherry blossoms. Of course, there are many other such places dotted around Japan, and I have visited some of them, but none rival Yoshino. In terms of both the number of sakura trees and the duration of the flowering season, Yoshino is in a class of its own. A wave of cherry blossom advances slowly up the mountain — from the Lower Thousand in early April, through the Middle and Upper Thousands, and finally reaching the Inner Thousand. It's a magnificent sight, and anyone witnessing it can appreciate why Yoshino's sakura have attained such fame.

Over the last twenty years or so, I have visited this area several times, but it was in April of 1987 that I first set out for Yoshino with High Definition Video equipment. I was planning to begin shooting for a project in Hokkaido that summer, so it was necessary to do some experimenting beforehand. Since it happened to be the right time of year for sakura blossoms, I decided to go to the ideal spot, Mount Yoshino. I've gone back there every spring for the last three years, as well as making two visits in the fall. And now the fruit of all this labor has been distilled into Yoshino's Magical Splendor.

For someone who chooses to photograph nature — whether on film or High Definition Video tape — timing is of the utmost importance. This is especially true of flower blossoms and autumn leaves, since they are at their best for only a short period, and that changes from one year to the next. Sure enough, when shooting in Yoshino I had a hard time trying to adjust my schedule to that of nature. In fact, in my second spring there the cherry trees were very late in blossoming, so that even in mid-April hardly any of them were in bloom. But then I was fortunate in being able to shoot the yulan that came into blossom before the sakura. Incidentally, this year (1990) I visited Yoshino a little after mid-April — though not with the High Definition Video equipment — and the blossom had completely disappeared, leaving the trees covered in fresh green leaves.

That's why timing is so important when shooting nature. It is natural for nature to continue changing which means the ever — changing scene may be enjoyed forever. Nature appears in a wide variety of guises. There's something special about capturing these changes with the sort of fine detail offered by High Definition Video — different from conventional photography. I feel certain that anyone watching this Spring & Autumn in Yoshino will be able to enjoy Japan's seasons — the sakura blossom and the scarlet maple leaves — in their full glory.